

Association for Information Systems AIS Electronic Library (AISeL)

ECIS 2004 Proceedings

European Conference on Information Systems
(ECIS)

2004

Knowledge Management - A Fad or a Field with a Future?

Alf Westelius
Linköping University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2004>

Recommended Citation

Westelius, Alf, "Knowledge Management - A Fad or a Field with a Future?" (2004). *ECIS 2004 Proceedings*. 155.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2004/155>

This material is brought to you by the European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS) at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in ECIS 2004 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

Knowledge management - a fad or a field with a future?

Alf Westelius, Linköping University, Sweden

Knowledge is often claimed to be a key to successful organisational performance, and calls for continuous learning and continuous improvement are so common that we hardly notice them any more. Organizations are being advised that to remain competitive, they must efficiently and effectively create, capture, locate, and share their organization's knowledge and expertise, and have the ability to bring that knowledge to bear on problems and opportunities. Information systems professionals and academics saw this as an opportunity to apply their existing knowledge and tools, and in the late 1990's, Knowledge management became one of the fastest growing areas of interest to the information systems field. Knowledge management was a label that attracted attention and conferred status to those who used it.

And where are we today? On the one hand, there are journals with titles containing "knowledge management", conferences are held, books are written. On the other hand, there are academics and practitioners who begin to question the value of the title Knowledge management. The label has been tarnished by overselling. It has been hijacked by software suppliers. There is a long list of KM-ventures in organisations that have not paid off. When the consultant companies faced difficult times recently, KM consultants were among the first to be laid off. Perhaps most of the useful theories in the area have been borrowed from elsewhere, and topics discussed under the KM heading can also still to an even larger extent be found under headings such as organisational learning, information management, innovation, human resource management, organisation, communities, etc. Considering this, is Knowledge management a field with a future or was it just a fad that we would be better off if we now leave it behind us?

This panel discussion explores the question: *Is it time to drop the topic label "knowledge management", or can it still offer important contributions to the information systems field?*

1.1 Panel Format

This panel will take the form of a dynamic and open discussion. The moderator will briefly introduce the panel and panellists. Panellists will briefly describe their experiences in researching aspects of knowledge development, transfer and application, their standpoint regarding the panel question, and their arguments for this standpoint. Each panellist's statement will be followed by a brief period of questions, comments, or rebuttals from the moderator and the other panellists. After all panellists have had a chance to speak and respond to the other panellists, the discussion will be opened to include the audience. To encourage participation, the moderator will solicit questions from the audience, moderating interaction among members of the audience and the panel. The panellists will attempt, through this interactive discussion and debate, to develop and frame the future of Knowledge management as a field.

1.2 Persons

Chair: Alf Westelius, Linköping University, Sweden

Panellists:

- Marco De Marco, Università Cattolica del Sacro Coure, Italy
- Sven Carlsson, Lund University, Sweden
- Tor Guimaraes, Tennessee Technological University, USA